

Ralph Ward Esq. Drum 1777 Paris 21st Dec: 1777
Rec: 13 June 1778.

Dear Sir

I congratulate you on our important success against Mr. Burgoyne, & assure you that our affairs in this part of the World stood much in need of some such event. The conduct of the French Ministry has for some time past been very equivocal, & in many instances extremely offensive. At present our affairs here wear a very pleasing aspect, but I am sorry to say that our new friends appear to me to act so little upon manly, & honourable principles, that had the arms of our enemies prevailed against us, we should have been sacrificed without any ceremony. It is improper that this should be generally known, but it would be more so that the Members of Congress should be ignorant of it. This I mention to you because I wish you to be persuaded that our salvation must depend upon our own exertions. In my last letter to you I mentioned something of the extraordinary misconduct of Mr. Thomas Morris the Commercial Agent in this Kingdom. In truth I can not help thinking but the unprosperous appearance of our affairs of late at this Court may have been occasioned by this Gentleman. The French Ministry have long known that his enormities have been laid before Congress by our three Commissioners here, & yet they see him continued in his office, & know from unquestionable authority that his Brother was determined to support him in it, & had influence enough in Congress to do it, in defiance of every application. This seems the more extraordinary as he has taken the management of his own private affairs out of his hands, being convinced how unworthy he was to have the care of them. They were inclined from this to hold the Commissioners in contempt, & their

opinion of the Wisdom, & Virtue, - even of Congress itself was I fear lessened. So convinced am I of the great power, & influence of M^r Robert Morris, that I have not a doubt, were he to know of this representation to you, that my removal from the appointment which I have at present the honour of holding under Congress would be the consequence of it. I wish therefore not to be subjected to his enmity to no purpose. If any good one can be answered by it, I would willingly submit to it. In writing to you upon this subject I have no motive but the public good. I have not the least acquaintance with the Gentleman complained of; even his person is unknown to me, I wish his character were so likewise, but as that is so often spoken of by every body who comes from Nantes, I should think myself guilty of a neglect of my duty, were I not to mention it to you. I will not trouble you by entering into particulars; if you are desirous of seeing them, by examining the letters of the Commissioners, & especially those of M^r Deane, you will meet with full information. Let the consequence be what it will; Whether the grievance which I have mentioned to you be removed, or whether I be removed myself, it will, always be a consolation to me that I have discharged my duty. —

In my letter of the 6th Octo^r I informed you of my having made an agreement for a quantity of Blankets, & Negro Cloth to be shipped from hence. One part of the Conduct of the French Ministry, which I have mentioned above as offensive, consisted in their throwing considerable embarrassments in the way of the Ships, that were loading in their Harbours for North America. At one time they were suffered to get ready, at another the Officers at the different Ports received orders to put a stop to all preparations. My Cloth was to have been shipped by the 15th Octo^r at farthest; The Vessel that was to have carried it is not yet

sailed, & I have lately been informed by the person who was to have executed my commission, that he has not been able to do it for the above reasons. Indeed if he could do it, it seems now too late. The winter will be nearly passed before it could possibly arrive in Carolina, & Mr. Owen will I hope have taken care to supply my Negroes with those necessary articles, let the price be what it would. The Negroes ought to be comfortably clothed, if there is a possibility of doing it. I cannot think of their not being so, without the greatest uneasiness, & I would take my chance of borrowing money in Europe for the maintenance of my family, & have the whole of my Crop appropriated to that purpose, rather than they should be subjected to such distress.

My intimacy with the Tuscan Minister at this Court has enabled me to do my business more effectually than if I had been at Florence; he is a man of ability, very friendly to our cause, & in great favour with the Grand Duke his Master. By his advice I have delayed my journey into Italy, & I have reason to be satisfied with it, though contrary to my own wishes.

It is certain that the King of Prussia has lately refused a passage through his Dominions to some German Troops intended to be sent to America, & it is said to have been done at the desire of the Emperor. This is a point that I have continually pressed with my Florentine friend, & he has repeatedly assured me that the Grand Duke's interest with his Brother may be depended on. This is a matter of such a nature that you will of course take care that it be entreated. It is very possible that the King of Prussia may have been induced to act thus by motives that we are not acquainted with. The contrary is likewise possible; & that possibility affords

me some satisfaction. When the Congress did me the honour to give me a Commission, & Instructions, they neglected furnishing me with proper funds to execute them. I have avoided mentioning this to the Committee for foreign Affairs, from a point of delicacy. I need have no such scruples with you, & I depend upon your friendship to set this matter in its proper light.

The public service has not been retarded a moment on this account; nor shall it be. Mr. Will^m Lee who was appointed at the same time a Commissioner to the Court of Vienna is in the same situation. This seems extraordinary as the three Gentlemen at this Court, whose Commissions are exactly the same as ours, have very ample appointments. It is proper that I should inform you of this. If it should be said that it is difficult to make remittances, the answer is plain; a Vote of Congress that the Commissioners at this Court be directed to pay such a sum out of any money they have now, or may hereafter have in their hands will be sufficient.

I have had a very severe fit of the Gout which has already confined me seven weeks to my Chamber; it is considerably abated, & I hope my confinement will not last much longer. The weather however is extremely cold, & of course unfavourable to me. Mr. Izard desires her Compliments to you. I am under the necessity of employing her to write for me, as my hands are still too weak to do me that service.

I am Dear Sir

Your friend, & humble servant

Ra. Izard.